

*Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you, the representatives of the people of the state of CT.*

*Please consider for a moment the moral implications of the issue at hand.*

*This land swap is about trading public property for private property. If the properties were of equal value perhaps the trade might make some sense...but town assessors say they are not of equal value. AND there are other important considerations...*

*As noted, the DEP, the agency empowered to serve as custodian of this public land, does not favor this land transfer. Also the governor of the state of CT has already rejected a previous attempt to acquire this land.*

*The pattern of behavior of purchasing land with public tax dollars and then turning them over to the benefit of a handful of well-connected private citizens is not new.*

*This region of the state has a rich history of 'a wink and a nod' handshake deals. Case in point: The Valley Railroad, known to many as the Essex Steam Train.*

*The Valley Railroad story is instructive of 'wink and nod' deals like this proposed land swap. Back in 1969 the state bought 300-acres of Ct River waterfront property for \$380,000. State officials told the public the purchase was to create a park for hiking, picnicking, and outdoor recreation. Within days of the acquisition what did the state do? They turn around and lease the entire 300-acres of state parkland for **\$500 a year** to the Valley Railroad, a newly created private for profit company with just 30 well connected stockholders.*

*Forty years later, the Valley Railroad still has a 'sweetheart' deal leasing this invaluable 22-mile stretch of state parkland from the DEP for a mere \$15,000 annually. The railroad pays no property tax on the track, or the buildings, which house their operations, yet they claim millions in revenue.*

*Isn't it strange how these deals happen.*

*Doesn't anyone get outraged when property owned by all the citizens of this state passes into private hands for private gain?*

*Perhaps the project now being considered has good intentions and will ultimately benefit the public. But please, make no decision until all the details are clearly explained to the public, carefully analyzed and critically considered.*

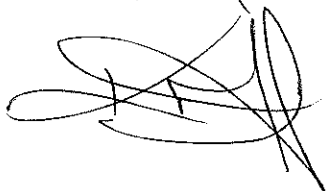
*It's no secret that more and more people are cynical of government, and cynical of elected officials. Why? Because it appears that you are no longer working on OUR behalf.*

*I ask you to truly listen to our plea, and let today be the day we come together and begin to unwind this perverted sense of what our government exists for. Is this not what democracy is all about?*

*I am here to ask that you represent us. All of us, the people of the State of CT and PROTECT, NOT GIVE AWAY, what is ours, paid for with our tax dollars.*

*Thank you*

*KARRIE-ANN MORRIS*

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KARRIE-ANN MORRIS' written in a cursive, overlapping manner.